DEPARTMENT OF STATE

P&U 099-83-78

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July 11, 1980

The Most Reverend Walter F. Sullivan
Bishop of Richmond
Diocese of Richmond
811 Cathedral Place
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Dear Bishop Sullivan:

I have received your letters of June 27 to the President and the Secretary in which you expressed grave concern about the events in Korea since May 17 and United States government policy toward the Republic of Korea.

Our fundamental interest in peace and stability in Northeast Asia would be best served in Korea by progress toward constitutional reform and a more broadly based civilian government which has the support of the Korean people. We have therefore expressed publicly and privately our deep concern over the recent serious setbacks in the process of political liberalization--the extension of martial law, the suspension of all political activity, and the arrest of political leaders. Our concern over the issue of "political development" in Korea led us to lodge stiff protests with Korean military leaders after the unauthorized military movements of last December and has been the underlying motivation for our stress since then on the importance we attach to progress, under civilian control, to a more democratic form of government. The declaration of full martial law May 17 and the actions taken thereafter have been a significant setback. While the Korean government has pledged, most recently in President Choi's speech of June 12, that its political schedule will continue, we will judge the regime on its actions, rather than its words.

Mr. KIM Dae Jung was included in the group of prominent political leaders who were detained for investigation on May 17 and 18, at the time of the declaration of full emergency martial law. On July 4, the Martial Law Command announced that it had decided to turn Mr. Kim and 36 other arrested persons over to its Prosecution Division on charges of violating martial law decrees, the Foreign Exchange Control Law, the Anti-Communism Law, and the National Security Law. We are concerned by these detentions and by the subsequent cessation of normal political activity, and will follow closely the development of any legal cases entered against those detained. We have expressed to the Korean government our concern over the welfare of these prisoners,

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have inquired as to their whereabouts, and have urged that their legal status be speedily and fairly resolved in trials open to international observers. With specific regard to Mr. Kim, we have noted publicly our judgment that some of the charges against him are far-fetched and that some others amount to little more than recognition that he was campaigning for the Presidency.

In light of the significant events in the Republic of Korea, we particularly appreciate your views.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Rich
Director of Korean Affairs